

THROUGH CHILDREN'S EYES: THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

28 February 2016

Today's scripture reading for Lent deals with the most thorny issues in any faith – why do bad things happen to good people. This is a large and complex issues for young people to understand – and yet they are not unfamiliar with injustice. Indeed “bullying” is a very prevalent issue for our times and for our school systems. Our young people are flooded with anti-bullying messages and our churches are flush with Safeguarding courses to protect those who are at risk – the young and vulnerable adults.

The gospel has Jesus' disciples asking him about two recent disasters... one man made and one a natural disaster... and they ask him whether the people affected by them were guilty of some sin and were therefore being punished by God. In the first instance, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, has come across some Galilean faithful Jews offering sacrifice... a whole burnt offering and for some unknown reason, Pilate, has them killed and their human blood mixed with the blood of their animal sacrifice on the altar... how horrid and brutal. In the second instance, a high brick or stone tower has collapsed and some nearby residents were crushed in the falling debris. And the disciples ask, “Is their doom a consequence or sign of their sinfulness? If not why has God allowed this to happen to them?”

Our eight-year-old artist, Anna, has captured the discovery by Pilate of the faithful Galileans. These sad faced Galileans are watching as their religious sacrifice is made a sacrilege. In our age-appropriate version, Pilate, mounted on the ultimate symbol of wealth and power - a horse - has trash thrown upon their offering; much to their disgust. Anna does not answer the historical question of - Why... why “mans' inhumanity to man” or “why evil affects the righteous.” But she captures the disappointment, shock and despondence. The Galileans are sad faced indeed. Pilate looks on with steely glint of eye and smirk of face.

Later in Lent, Jesus will have an encounter of his own with this same Pontius Pilate. Our artist captures the unconcerned brutality of the machine of totalitarian governance. There is something about absolute power corrupting here. Later we will see what happens when absolute corrupt power meets absolute divine love.

28 FEBRUARY – 3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

Luke 13: 1-9

Repent or Perish

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

